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Forty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 31 January 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. AMOO-GOTTFRIED (Ghana)

later: Mr. BERNALES BALLESTEROS (Peru)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE (agenda item 4) (continued) (E/CN.4/1991/6-8, 60-62 and 65; A/45/3, 13 and Add.1, 35 and Corr.1, 84, 306, 503, 576, 595, 608-614 and 726)

THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION (agenda item 9) (continued) (E/CN.4/1991/13 and 14; E/CN.4/1991/NGO/2; A/45/488)

1. Mr. ZAFAR (Pakistan), speaking on agenda item 4, said that there could be no talk of human rights if they did not go hand in hand with the principle of the indivisibility of mankind. In other words, it was the selective application of human rights that affected their integrity and amounted, in fact, to an abuse of the concept itself.

2. Pakistan was deeply concerned about current events in the Middle East, where Palestinians had been suffering the most repressive and brutal occupation for 24 years. It strongly condemned the atrocities committed daily by the Israeli authorities, who were killing innocent Palestinians in their attempt to suppress the intifada. Those massacres were not isolated incidents, but part of a well-planned strategy designed to destroy the will and resistance of the unarmed Palestinians, who were demanding their inalienable right to self-determination. It was high time for the United Nations to take action to put an end to the terror of the Israeli occupation, in order to stop the demolishing of houses, the breaking of bones and the killing of children.

3. The issue which particularly concerned the Pakistani delegation had already been raised by the International Commission of Jurists at a previous meeting: namely, that Palestinians in the occupied territories had not been included when gas masks had been issued in recent weeks. That exclusion was a serious matter, because the failure to provide the same protection for all residents of the occupied territories might be one way of forcing non-Jews to emigrate. The Commission should be on its guard, because there were some violations of human rights which, although subtle, were still sinister, and the case in question was one of them.

4. The Israelis must realize that the struggle of the Palestinian people to regain its dignity and acquire nationhood could not be suppressed by senseless acts of terror and that the people would continue its struggle under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole legitimate representative. Israel was also mistaken if it thought that it could guarantee its security and establish hegemony by disseminating violence and terror in the Middle East. Pakistan supported the struggle of the Palestinian people to gain a homeland, condemned the Israeli occupation and called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Pakistan condemned the illegal policy of establishing settlements by expropriating the Palestinians and that of changing the demographic nature of the occupied Arab territories, in defiance of United Nations resolutions. Israel should also withdraw from the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

5. The world order was changing rapidly and one of the most obvious changes was that the same standards would have to be applied to everyone. The world must ask itself how it could convince young people everywhere that the United Nations believed in human rights, in deeds and in action. Adopting resolutions and preparing working papers would be of little use to the cause of human rights if political opportunism still prevailed in the end.

6. The Pakistani delegation called upon the international community to convene immediately an international peace conference on the Middle East, in which all the parties to the conflict, including the PLO, and the five permanent members of the Security Council would participate on an equal footing. Pakistan was convinced that, until Israel withdrew from the occupied territories, peace would not be possible and Palestinians would not be able to take their rightful place in the community of nations.

7. Mr. CHADHA (India), speaking on agenda item 4, said that the complexities of the Palestinian issue were due to historical developments and to a mutual distrust compounded by the recurrent hostilities. But those facts should not provide an excuse for the international community which, to date, had failed to find a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement. Such a settlement was even more imperative now, given the increasing gravity of the situation. The General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights had repeatedly condemned the human rights violations suffered by the Palestinians and had reaffirmed the Palestinians' right to an independent homeland. But the Israeli Government had persisted in trying to stifle the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians - a policy which was bound to be self-defeating.

8. Israel was the occupying Power under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and The Hague Conventions of 1907. In fact, the occupation itself was a violation of the human rights of the civilian population, and all other violations derived from it; the list of all those violations was well known. The Israeli Government was trying to change the status and the ethnic and demographic composition of the occupied territories, stamp out the identity of the original inhabitants who still lived there, and destroy the very basis of their existence by removing all means of development. The international community could not indefinitely ignore Israel's refusal to acknowledge its responsibilities as the administering Power under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention, even if it attempted to justify its refusal by shifting the blame on to others in order to distract attention from itself.

9. None of the States in the region would be able to live within secure international frontiers until the Palestinians had become masters in their own house. There could not be a world order based on peace and security until the threats of conflict and instability emanating from the Middle East had been eliminated. A just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question was, accordingly, a necessary pre-condition for an era of peace, lasting stability and progress in the world. But the world must not wait too long. The "post-cold-war" world was emerging, and festering sores like the Palestinian issue must be tended and healed.

10. The Indian delegation considered that the Israeli authorities should abandon their ill-conceived dream of a "greater Israel". They must withdraw from all the Palestinian territory they had occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories. They must also renounce confrontation, which unleashed the spiral of violence, and come to terms with the legitimacy of Palestine. Recent events on the international scene had given the United Nations fresh impetus, and it had begun determined initiatives to resolve many crises and conflicts in various parts of the world. The time had come to tackle the problem of Palestine, too, and enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination.

11. The international community and the United Nations had a special responsibility to guarantee protection for Palestinians in the occupied territories. The United Nations must also secure the co-operation of the occupying Power in preventing human rights violations. India had always been steadfast in its support for the cause of the Palestinian people, as the Indian Prime Minister had recalled on 29 November 1990, in a message to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. India would fully support all efforts to find a swift, just and peaceful settlement for a long-outstanding problem.

12. Mr. OMAR (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the main cause of the serious human rights violations inflicted on Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories was the racist nature of the Zionist régime; those violations would continue as long as the occupation régime retained its racist character. The Zionist movement was based on the misguided idea that all Jews throughout the world belonged to a single people and a single nationality, distinct from all others, whatever country they lived in. Judaism was a link which united all the Jews of the world. It was on the basis of that misguided doctrine that the Zionist movement had established a State solely for Jews, in order to unite the Jewish people by bringing together Jews from all over the world in their historic homeland, Eretz Israel, as part of the so-called Aliyah ("ascent").

13. That plan could only succeed by means of two complementary actions: Jews were transferred to a particular area, and non-Jews were expelled from it to make room for the Jews. In order to do that, the Zionists had not hesitated to uproot Jews living in various parts of the world, even by violence. Recently, a large number of Jews had migrated to Palestine, the majority of them being Soviet Jews. The documents before the Commission confirmed that the operation was continuing in the West Bank, particularly in the Arab city of Jerusalem, with the help of funds from the United States of America which were being used in defiance of United States law.

14. Many Palestinian and Christian Arabs had been expelled from their country as long ago as 1948, as was borne out in a statement by Count Bernadotte, the United Nations mediator, who had been assassinated that year in Jerusalem:

> "The exodus of Palestinian Arabs resulted from panic created by fighting in their communities, by rumours concerning real or alleged acts of terrorism, or expulsion ...".

"There have been numerous reports from reliable sources of large-scale looting, pillaging and plundering, and of instances of destruction of villages without apparent military necessity". (Official Records of the General Assembly, Third session, Supplement No. 11 (A/648), Part One, chap. V, paras. 6 and 7).

15. The Zionist movement was based on the mistaken idea that the Jews had certain rights because they were Jews, which meant that non-Jews had no such rights. Thus, the Jews had the right to settle in Palestine because they were Jews even if they had never seen the land of Palestine, but non-Jews had no such right. That again had been borne out by Count Bernadotte who, in 1948, had understood the tragedy in the making and the responsibilities in the matter:

"It would be an offence against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine, and, indeed, at least offer the threat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees who have been rooted in the land for centuries".

16. The Zionist movement invoked the principles of international ethics to justify mass Jewish immigration into Palestine while it opposed the free return of Palestinian Arabs to their country. Such division of the world between Jews and non-Jews could go extremely far, since there were even rabbis who told soldiers that they had the right to kill non-Jewish civilians. Zionist practices thus constituted a flagrant case of discrimination taken to extremes. They were the cause of all the suffering in the occupied territories, and the vicious circle would never be broken so long as zionism endured.

17. Those who affirmed that the Zionist movement was a national liberation movement were wrong: a national liberation movement was based on united national forces with local roots. That was not the case with zionism, whose roots were not planted in the soil of Palestine. The entity created in the land of Palestine had been so established at the expense of the Palestinian people, to whom, and also to the entire region and the world as a whole, it had become a source of anguish. The Commission on Human Rights should request the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to make an in-depth study of zionism and the entity it had created in Palestine.

18. Mr. Bernales Ballesteros (Peru) took the Chair.

19. Mrs. LYAGOUBI-OUAHCHI (Observer for Tunisia) noted that, with the ending of the cold war, a certain détente had been established in international relations which had given reason to hope that Israel would put an end to its policy of oppression and allow the Palestinian people fully to exercise its rights in accordance with international human rights instruments and United Nations resolutions. However, the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, dated 19 October 1990 (A/45/576), showed that Israel was continuing to flout the rights of all categories of Palestinian people. The international community could hardly remain passive in face of the tragic events that had occurred in the occupied Arab territories such as those at Uyun Qarah in May 1990 and in

the Al-Aqsa Mosque in October 1990. Nor was it acceptable that resolutions adopted over the previous 23 years by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights should remain unimplemented and that Israel should continue to violate international human rights instruments, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention.

20. Israel was pursuing a policy of criminal destruction against the Palestinian people. The Palestinians were being subjected to massacre and torture and there had been very many injuries and deaths among them. Emergency laws were being applied. For example, universities and schools had been closed indefinitely. The Palestinian people had been taken hostage by Israel, which used it as a shield. Despite the many appeals made by United Nations bodies, Israel continued to flout the Fourth Geneva Convention.

21. Effective measures must at last be taken to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people. Israel must become aware of the fact that, by continuing to disregard United Nations resolutions, persisting in its policy of massive oppression and rejecting the convening of an international conference, it was a threat to world peace. As the Chairman had said in his opening statement, the principles of human rights must be viewed in a global manner and were inseparable.

22. Mr. SHANA (Observer for Jordan) said that the United Nations had played and continued to play a major role with regard to respect for human rights. The Charter of the United Nations and the many legal instruments on human rights and resolutions were so many stages in a lengthy effort for the protection of mankind. Many colonized and oppressed peoples had benefited from the humanitarian experience of United Nations bodies. In that context, it was inadmissible that the rights of the Palestinian people should continue to be flouted, that Palestinians should be subjected to arbitrary administrative detention, torture and collective punishment, and to economic reprisals designed to impoverish them by all possible means, and that they should suffer so many intimidating and humiliating practices. Nor was it acceptable that they should be victims of acts of fanaticism by settlers in the occupied Arab territories and that the perpetrators of the violations should be acquitted by the Israeli courts.

23. The establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories was wholly illegal, and United Nations resolutions were very clear on that point. As occupying Power, Israel was required to respect the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which was applicable to the occupied Arab territories. The Commission's role was to ensure respect for international human rights instruments and to protect all persons who were arbitrarily deprived of their rights. The Palestinians therefore entertained hopes that the Commission would draw world attention to their plight and do everything possible to enable them to recover their rights. Human rights were the measuring rod of the progress made by mankind, and their violation anywhere in the world was a sign of regression by mankind as a whole and a reversal of civilization. Violations of the human rights of the Palestinians were thus intolerable. Since 1976, the Palestinians had resisted the occupation with all their might. The intifada, which had entered its fourth year, had shown that despite the sufferings endured under the yoke of Israeli occupation, they would not abandon their struggle to secure their freedom and restore their dignity. They should have

the same right as other peoples to exercise self-determination, to build their own State in accordance with their culture and to live in peace and stability. The international community must finally understand that the protection of the Palestinians was a matter of priority.

24. The inhabitants of the Syrian Arab Golan and southern Lebanon, which were occupied by Israeli forces, were experiencing the same tragedy as the Palestinians, since they, too, were deprived of their rights and their land. Israel's machinations in those territories had been condemned in various United Nations resolutions, but Israel had disregarded them and continued to flout the principles of international law and to rebuff all Arab peace initiatives. It had even gone back on its own proposals in that respect and sought only to strengthen its illegal presence in the territories by force and to suppress any resistance.

25. A just and global solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must be found as a matter of extreme urgency. The convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices, in which all parties to the conflict would participate, would be the best means of achieving a durable international settlement that would take account of the legitimate right of the Palestinians to self-determination and of the right to peace and security of all peoples in the region.

26. Mr. ABU OSHBA (Observer for Saudi Arabia) expressed his gratitude to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories for its reports (A/45/306 and A/45/576) on the question under discussion, which provided some highly useful details.

27. The serious events that were taking place in the region of the Arabian-Persian Gulf following the naked aggression of Iraq against Kuwait must not cause the tragic situation of Palestinians and other Arabs in the territories occupied by Israel to be forgotten. In order to suppress any resistance, the Israeli occupying forces were applying in those territories increasingly repressive measures which had compounded the sufferings of the Palestinian people and had claimed thousands of victims, either killed or injured, among the civilian population, as could be seen from the latest report of Amnesty International. The veritable genocide to which the Palestinian people was being subjected and the flagrant and systematic violations of human rights committed by the Israeli forces in the occupied territories showed that Israel was flouting all principles of international law and all international human rights standards. The Israeli authorities persistently refused to respect the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, even though it was applicable to all the occupied territories, as reaffirmed by the General Assembly in resolution 44/48 of 8 December 1989. The Israeli Government's refusal to allow an international commission to investigate the Al-Aqsa Mosque massacre of 8 October 1990 also testified to Israel's desire to hide the truth about its aggression against Christian and Muslim places of worship. The situation in the Gulf had also distracted world attention from the problems created by the influx of Jewish immigrants to Israel. No protest had been raised against the arrival in that country over the previous 7 months of 200,000 persons who had been installed in the Jewish settlements established in the occupied territories, to the detriment of the Palestinian people.

28. The Israeli Government was applying the same policy of oppression and repression in occupied Syrian Arab Golan and southern Lebanon, in defiance of the principles of international law and the various United Nations resolutions on the question. The time had come for the international community to fulfil its obligations and put pressure on the Israeli Government so that it would finally see reason and respect the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Whatever Israel might do, it could not suppress the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The world was moving inexorably towards the establishment of a new international order in which all the Arabs would be able to exercise their fundamental rights in peace and dignity.

29. Mr. ABDULLA MAHMOUD (Observer for the United Arab Emirates) said that the terrible crimes committed against the Palestinians and the other Arabs of the occupied territories, as well as in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and southern Lebanon, which were described in detail in the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/45/576), were clear proof of Israel's determination to continue its policy of annexation, expansion and oppression, as well as its refusal to implement United Nations resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention and to respect the principles enshrined in international human rights instruments.

30. Israel had taken advantage of the Gulf conflict to establish new Jewish settlements and increase its repression of the Palestinian people, as shown by the new massacres in the Gaza Strip in September 1990 and in Jerusalem, particularly the massacre at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on 8 October 1990. Those acts of violence had been condemned by the entire world and by the Security Council itself in its resolution 672 (1990), which Israel had, however, ignored. All reports, not only that of the Special Committee, but also those of various other organizations, confirmed the seriousness of the human rights violations committed in the occupied territories. The Amnesty International report, in particular, stated that some 25,000 Palestinians had been arrested in connection with the intifada, thousands of them had been tried by military courts, more than 4,000 had been sentenced to administrative detention without trial, and more than 13,000 people had still been in prison at the end of 1990. Moreover, thousands of Palestinians had been subjected to torture and ill-treatment in detention centres. However, despite its sufferings, the Palestinian people was still determined to defend its rights and achieve freedom for its territory by any means possible.

31. Israel had extended its policy of annexation and Judaization to the Syrian Arab territory of the Golan, whose inhabitants had been deprived of all their fundamental rights. Israel's acts of aggression against southern Lebanon likewise threatened the peace and unity of Lebanon and hampered the Lebanese Government's efforts to restore peace and security to the country after 15 years of war.

32. Through the Commission, his delegation appealed to the international community to force Israel to put an end to its practices and to respect all United Nations resolutions so that the Palestinians and all the other Arabs of the occupied territories could exercise their rights freely and peacefully at last.

33. Ms. BANDETTINI DI POGGIO (International League for the Rights and the Liberation of Peoples) said that the situation of the Palestinians, the seriousness of which had been emphasized by the Commission on Human Rights in the resolutions it had adopted on the issue at its forty-sixth session, was all the more dramatic at present because the Palestinians were suffering the backlash from the Gulf war and were being subjected to ever more repressive measures by the Israeli authorities.

34. Since the beginning of the Gulf conflict, there had been a curfew almost round the clock in the occupied territories, and the penalties for those who failed to respect it were extremely harsh. Shortages of food, milk and dairy products had already been reported, and stocks of agricultural produce and manufactures were likely to run out quickly unless the curfew was lifted and production could resume. It would also become more and more difficult for Palestinian civilians to survive, because many factories and businesses had closed down and the workers had no jobs. All those measures, which the Israeli authorities referred to as precautionary but which, in fact, constituted serious violations, also had alarming repercussions for the medical services and relief activities. The curfew and the resultant difficulty in replenishing supplies had hampered the food distribution programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) in the refugee camps; vaccination campaigns had been interrupted, the emergency services were unable to function normally and people from distant areas were reluctant to leave their homes to seek medical treatment if they needed it.

35. The Israeli authorities had informed UNWRA and other international organizations that harsh measures, possibly including the use of force, would be taken against anyone who broke the curfew or protested against it. The use of weapons in such a case was clearly illegal, and the international community must take immediate action to stop it.

36. Moreover, human rights workers, journalists and other local observers who did not have curfew passes were no longer able to monitor the situation at first hand, which meant that the civilian Palestinian population of the occupied territories had been practically cut off from the outside world and deprived of any outside assistance now that most foreign embassies and consulates had been closed as a result of the Gulf crisis; they were deprived even of indirect protection, since Israel was no longer hampered in its activities by the presence of witnesses.

37. In previous resolutions, the Commission had condemned the repeated violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and all the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people by the Israeli authorities. Many representatives of countries and non-governmental organizations had stressed that the international community should play a more active role and exert more pressure on Israel to respect international standards and United Nations resolutions. Given the current situation, it was more urgent than ever to try to establish a mechanism for negotiation which could lead to a political settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The International League for the Rights and the Liberation of Peoples considered that the problems of the Middle East could only be resolved by dialogue and negotiation, and it therefore unreservedly supported the proposal to convene an international conference under United Nations auspices with the aim of achieving a comprehensive settlement

for all the political problems of the Middle East. Unlike the Israeli authorities, which had declared that it would be much more difficult to reach a compromise with the Arabs if a large number of foreign countries took part in the conference, the International League for the Rights and the Liberation of Peoples considered that only truly international participation could guarantee the implementation of any negotiated settlement of that crucial problem and respect for the right of all Palestinians to live in their own free and independent homeland.

STATEMENT BY MR. JACQUES POOS, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF LUXEMBOURG AND PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

38. The CHAIRMAN welcomed Mr. Poos, who was to address the Commission in his capacity as President of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities.

39. Mr. POOS, speaking first on the subject of respect for human rights in international relations, reiterated the condemnation of the 12 members of the European Communities of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the violations committed by the Iraqi authorities against their own population and the population of Kuwait. He recalled that the Twelve had also condemned Iraq's unacceptable violations of the standards laid down in the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and had categorically demanded that, during the hostilities in the Gulf, Iraq should comply fully with all the principles of humanitarian law applicable in wartime.

40. Following the tragic events which had occurred during the night of 12/13 January in Vilnius, and the night of 20/21 January in Riga, the Communities and their member States had condemned the acts of repression committed by the USSR, which were in flagrant violation, in particular, of the Charter of Paris, formally adopted on 21 November 1990 at the summit held by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in that city. The Communities had made an urgent appeal to the Soviet authorities to refrain from the use of force, put an end to their military intervention and resume a dialogue with the elected representatives of the Baltic peoples. Solutions to conflicts of all kinds should be based on the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which laid down fundamental democratic principles and stipulated a recourse to peaceful means. In Europe, such solutions should also take inspiration from the spirit of CSCE.

41. Developments in international relations and the far-reaching changes in the political situation in Europe and in the world had brought a new topicality to human rights. The Twelve fully shared the opinion of the United Nations Secretary-General that, over the past year, the issue of human rights had changed from a subsidiary theme in the international debate to become a dominant concern. The political emancipation of Central and Eastern European countries had brought to an end the European and world order which had emerged from the last great conflict and which had given rise to 49 years of ideological antagonism and confrontation. It was to be hoped that a new kind of international relations would replace the old rivalries, and that discussion of human rights issues would gradually move away from ideological conflicts. In particular, he hoped that the human rights debate would not merely move ground and fall victim to a new debate between countries which were highly industrialized and those which were not.

42. In the opinion of the European Communities and their member States, civil and political rights, on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights, on the other hand, were indivisible. A policy designed to implement one category of rights should not be used as a pretext for denying or neglecting other fundamental rights. That principle had been clearly reiterated at the latest ministerial conference held under the Lomé Convention. A declaration issued by the Twelve on 21 July 1986 stated that neither a lack of social and economic development nor any persuasion or ideology could justify a denial of civil and political rights. The Twelve acted and reacted jointly in situations where fundamental rights were flouted, whoever was responsible for the violations.

43. In the opinion of the Twelve, the implementation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly Articles 55 and 56, did not constitute unwarranted interference in the domestic affairs of a given country, but a moral right and duty of the international community. Intervention was all the more justified because respect for human rights was one of the essential factors in maintaining peace in the world. In some cases, United Nations peace-keeping activities might be called upon to play a new role, that of contributing to the monitoring of respect for human rights. Current events showed that all persistent and systematic violations of fundamental rights led to conflicts which spread rapidly beyond the limited context in which they had arisen. The issue of human rights had become a crucial factor in dialogue and co-operation between countries. It was in that spirit that the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities would make a detailed statement under item 12 of the Commission's agenda. No country was beyond reproach, and the Twelve would not intervene out of a desire to preach to others, but solely in order to contribute to the campaign to win respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world.

44. On the subject of the Commission's work, he reiterated the commitment of the Twelve to the achievement of a consensus solution to the technical problems on the Commission's agenda or under examination. Among other things, more attention should be paid to the need for flexible and more effective operation of the human rights monitoring bodies within the United Nations. The same was true of other tasks: rationalizing the Commission's agenda, adjusting the role of the advisory services and tackling the urgent question of financing for the Centre for Human Rights. It was essential for the Centre for Human Rights to receive a greater share of United Nations funding than its current allocation of less than 1 per cent. In that connection, the World Conference on Human Rights would doubtless be of great importance for the realization of human rights and the improvement of the existing legal instruments.

45. The activities of the Commission on Human Rights must have a legal basis in specific texts, but its true foundation was a moral framework underlying all the doctrines concerning respect for and promotion of human rights, which transcended frontiers and the centuries, social systems, ideologies and religions. To emphasize the timeless universality of human rights, he wished to quote the words of Mr. Mohamed Bedjaoui, a judge at the International Court

of Justice at The Hague and a former minister in Algeria, spoken at a symposium organized in 1989 by the Council of Europe on the universality of human rights in a pluralistic world:

> "The quest for human rights is not a new one. Its history is as old as that of man himself, reflecting both the many facets of the human genius and the terrifying excesses of which he is sometimes capable. This quest is thus a perpetual conquest, a product of the struggles and beliefs of all men, but most particularly those of the victims themselves. The beacons along the road of human rights have been the achievements of chosen nations at special moments in history. The point which we have now reached, not a final or definitive point but merely the present stage in the march of humanity, is that fundamental human rights are now expressed as something universal."

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.